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ABSTRACT

A case study narrates the development of one preservice teacher enrolled in a composition methods course that was based on inquiry, reflection, collaboration, and theory-building. Much of the course content centered on exploring, extending, and even transforming future secondary English teachers' beliefs about writing instruction and assessment. The culminating experience in the course was the development of a portfolio, a document which contained representative writing samples and demonstrated reflection and growth. The subject's portfolio was organized into six parts: personal history, personal writings, "think" pieces, biography of a "think" piece, student ethnographic project, and final retrospective piece. Qualitative analysis of the portfolio indicated that (1) throughout her schooling, the subject struggled to find her voice, to feel confident in her own abilities; (2) the "think" pieces helped the subject to get a clearer picture of herself as a teacher; and (3) the mini-ethnographic project proved most meaningful for the subject. Findings suggest that through autobiographical narratives, mini-ethnographic projects, and other experiences, the subject (as well as the other preservice teachers in the course) began to take the first steps toward the construction of their own personally situated theories of teaching, learning, and assessment. (A figure describing the categories of portfolio artifacts is included. Contains 28 references.) (RS)

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Reinventing a Composition Methods Course in Secondary English Education

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SYMPOSIUM

**Changing Conceptions of Literacy Teacher Education:
Reinventing Our Own Practice**

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Reinventing a Composition Methods Course in Secondary English Education

. . . Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves. Do not seek the answers, which cannot be given to you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will . . . gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer. --Rainer Maria Rilke

Introduction

Critics of teacher education programs point to the gap between the situated complexity of life in classrooms and the decontextualized, formal principles which are often transmitted through university curricula. In the past, teacher knowledge has regularly been described in terms of specific skills or predictable routines, and teacher educators believed that such static knowledge could be delivered to novices in preservice coursework and applied later in classrooms. Recently, however, researchers have attended to the complexities of teacher knowledge (Carter, 1990) and have suggested that effective teachers are those who move beyond simple routines by learning *to reflect*--by learning to examine their own practice critically and to search continually for ways to improve it.

In order to foster such a reflective frame of mind in novices, teacher educators have begun to redesign professional education coursework, inviting prospective teachers to participate in experiences of inquiry which support continual, lifelong, self-regulated learning. In addition, teacher educators have begun to rethink their own roles as teachers and learners. Well-designed coursework has the potential to enable teachers-to-be (as well as teacher educators) to grapple with their beliefs about teaching and learning, to explore their knowledge and conceptions of subject matter, to provide an occasion for transition to pedagogical thinking, and to engender a reflective attitude toward teaching (Grossman, 1991; 1992). In such professional education experiences, teacher candidates have opportunities to

become knowledge producers rather than knowledge receivers, moving from what Kutz (1992) calls *unconfident answer-knowers* to *confident question-askers* (p. 69). Fosnot (1989) represents the teacher educator's voice in rethinking such coursework:

> In looking at my own practice, I realized that I had always given an exam as a way to evaluate whether my students had learned or not, yet I was coming to see this procedure . . . as being in direct contradiction to the principles I had been advocating. I wanted instead to capitalize on the *process* of learning, rather than evaluation of a *product*; I wanted to maximize the opportunity to probe my students' understanding in a way that would cause them to continue questioning, rather than to accept rote answers. In particular, I wanted students to leave my class with a desire and thirst for continued inquiry. (p. 40)

This article describes the reconceptualization of a composition methods course in secondary English education, narrating the development of one preservice teacher who was enrolled in the course. Inquiry, reflection, collaboration, and theory-building were themes of this preservice education course in the teaching of composition. Readings for the course included Atwell (1987), Kirby & Liner (1988), Miller Cleary (1991), Tierney et al. (1991), Welty (1983), and an array of professional articles by classroom teachers. Much of the course content centered on exploring, extending, and even transforming future secondary English teachers' beliefs about writing instruction and assessment. This paper chronicles the events in the course which led to the initiation and development of preservice teacher portfolios. Through autobiographical narratives, mini-ethnographic projects, and other experiences, the preservice teachers in this course began to take the first steps toward the construction of their own "personally-situated theories" of teaching, learning, and assessment (Kutz, 1992). This "theory-making" enabled one teacher candidate (Anne, a pseudonym) to find her voice as an emerging secondary English teacher--a voice which will help her *to live*

the processes of inquiry and reflection and ultimately *to sustain* creative teaching practice in her own classroom.

Portfolios as a Vehicle for the Development of Voice

> *That's my dilemma, to learn to listen to my own voice, and trust it to find its way. . . . and to know that it is important because it is mine. --Anne, a teacher candidate*

Enabling individuals to find their *voices* as teachers has become a central concern of teacher educators (see Carter, 1993; Elbaz, 1991; Schubert & Ayers, 1992; Witherell & Noddings, 1991). In this article, I define "voice" as the actual speaking or writing of one's own thoughts, feelings, beliefs, questions, and experience. Richert (1992) suggests that "voice is a vehicle for reflective practice which results in ongoing learning in teaching," and that "being heard and hearing others . . . must be central to the curriculum in teacher education":

> Learning to hear oneself, or "honoring one's own voice," . . . is an important part of the process of coming to know. Students must be asked to speak what they know, and hear what they speak. They must be asked to speak what they feel and hear that as well. (pp. 192, 194)

In order to foster the emergence of individual voice in beginning teachers, I employed pedagogies in this course which invoked narrative modes, providing opportunities for the 1) writing of personal histories and autobiographies, 2) collaborative discussions of teaching cases or stories of teachers and teaching, 3) writing of teaching cases, and 4) conducting and reporting of ethnographic research. The culminating experience in the course was the development of a portfolio, a document which contained representative writing samples and demonstrated reflection and growth.

Advocates of the use of portfolios in literacy education underscore the importance of teacher autonomy, student ownership, self-expression, developmental process, and diversity (Tierney et al., 1991; Wolf, 1989; Graves & Sunstein, 1992). "[T]here is no right way to implement portfolios," Tierney and his colleagues write. "[E]ach classroom will reflect a unique approach to authentic assessment, and . . . each child's collection of documents will be different" (p. vii). In turn, advocates of teacher portfolios echo these beliefs, maintaining that portfolios should reflect "schoolteaching as a form of expression, a humane project, an evolving state of affairs, and a situated accomplishment over time" (Bird, 1990, p. 249). As portfolio keepers, prospective teachers begin to see teaching as an expressive, constructivist process.

I invited the teacher candidates in this course to participate in the on-going development of portfolios which would provide a demonstration of their growth as learners. Because I wanted the preservice teachers to understand, to actually *live through* Tierney's notion that "there is no right way to implement portfolios," I consciously refrained from providing them with a set of rigid guidelines or requirements. Throughout the course, we continually negotiated what might appear in the portfolios. This process of negotiation was unsettling and troubling for many of the teacher candidates, and even though they continually pushed me to provide them with guidelines ("What do *you* want us to put in these portfolios?"), I refused to give them a "portfolio recipe." Each of the completed portfolios was a unique reflection of individual growth; however, my analysis revealed that certain artifacts were apparent in many of the preservice teachers' portfolios in the composition course (see Figure 1). Anne's portfolio was organized into six parts: personal history,

personal writing goals, "think" pieces, biography of a "think" piece, student ethnographic project, and final retrospective piece. In addition, self-evaluative writings were interjected throughout her portfolio as were written responses from peers and the instructor.

In the following qualitative analysis of Anne's portfolio, I do not attempt to represent each artifact in full. What I do hope to convey is a sense of the whole, a discussion of the predominant themes which emerged from Anne's record of her growth in the course. Because her use of introductory quotations in the portfolio highlights many of these themes, I include some of the quotations here. Anne's portfolio invites the reader to accompany her on the first steps of her intellectual journey in learning to teach writing, a eventful journey fraught with both discomfort and joy. The straight path was lost indeed. Searching for the answers, Anne discovered the importance of living the *questions*.

Anne's Personal History: The Struggle for Voice

Anne's reflections on her memories of schooling reveal her struggle to find a voice, to feel confident in her own abilities. In her early elementary years, she recalled "trouble with reading" and being assigned to the lowest reading groups. After repeating the second grade, she moved to a new school, was assigned to a higher reading group, and "felt much more successful." Seventh grade brought her "boring" experiences with sentence diagramming; in eleventh grade, Anne listened to Mrs. Miller's lectures on different writers' lives and their works. But she didn't view herself as a writer. "I have been a lover of books all my life, and I am still amazed that the thoughts of others can move me to tears or anger or fear or laughter," Anne wrote. "That's the beauty of writing for those who can do it well, and the frustration for those who can't."

Struggle, frustration, doubt. Learning to trust her own voice wasn't easy for Anne. Ironically, her portfolio revealed the strength of her writing, of her individual voice:

> I think I see things as a writer would, but I have never felt I was able to put the beauty of my thoughts into words. It's frustrating sometimes to be able to see a moment in your mind, capture all its qualities, hold it like a snapshot, only to find yourself losing it when you try to write it down. That's the worst, I think. To know there's a voice inside wanting to speak, but not quite knowing how to say it in words.
>
> As a child, I spent a lot of time making up stories in my head. I have always been a writer of the mind and not of the paper. I have often admired those people who could somehow write the things I had been thinking, but that I couldn't quite put into words. Perhaps I am too self conscious of my writing to ever be courageous enough to write from the heart. I think that's what really good writers are able to do.

Looking inwardly, Anne began to realize that her search for "correct answers" had permeated her life as a reader and writer. "Writing is not like working an algebra problem," she reflected. "With writing, there is no correct answer. That's the hard thing about writing for me; it's individual. And I always questioned, 'Did I do it right?'" Constantly comparing herself to others, Anne believed that she lost much of her creativity and confidence: "I have spent my life looking over my shoulder wondering if I was doing it wrong."

Most of her positive literacy experiences stemmed from private moments reading with her father at bedtime or from watching her mother read: "I knew she was in a special place that I wanted to visit." Powerful reading experiences with her peers took place outside classroom walls: "During lunch, I sat with a group of girls and listened as Judy Blume's *Forever* was read aloud. We were mesmerized by it, yet conscious of its importance to us." In school, teachers affected Anne's sense of self and her literacy development in mostly negative ways. She remembered teachers who "bled on my papers" in red ink, who "forced

grammar upon me in large doses." As she began to articulate her vision of herself as an English teacher, Anne was clear:

> As a teacher, I want to learn with my students. I don't want to be the kind of teacher who stands in front of the class lecturing, and claiming to know all the answers. I feel students have much to teach us if we are only open enough to listen and learn from them. I want to teach kids to think for themselves, question their beliefs, explore life, dream impossibilities, and refuse to accept defeat as final. I want to be the kind of teacher who listens, understands, challenges, and motivates students.

Moving toward a realization of this vision proved to be difficult for Anne. In doing so, she had to move beyond familiar territory; she had to be willing to live with ambiguity, to embrace her questions which had no easy answers. "That's my dilemma, to learn to listen to my own voice, and trust it to find its way, . . . and to know that it is important because it is mine."

Setting Individual and Collective Goals

I asked the teacher candidates in this course to set their own goals so that they might monitor their progress more authentically, modeling an approach which I hoped would surface later in their own classrooms. From initial individual lists, we negotiated a class list and prioritized goals which became course objectives. Anne's personal goals for the composition course fell into four categories: 1) completion of specific pieces of writing (such as a writer's notebook or a children's story), 2) specific goals as a writer (including "to write something every day" or "to develop a timeline to guide my writing"), 3) goals for overcoming anxiety about writing, and 4) goals for thinking through her beliefs about the teaching of writing.

Specific pieces of writing would become a part of Anne's course portfolio, but she viewed her portfolio as a fluid document. The collection of works would change over time,

for she wanted to keep a student teacher's portfolio during upcoming months and later a teacher's portfolio. She longed to have a piece of writing published, to write more and regularly, and to put more of herself into her writing. Again, she recorded the importance of the search for voice and feelings of self-confidence, "to overcome anxieties about allowing others to read my work."

Think Pieces: Of Questions, Metaphors, and Change

My course syllabus invited individuals to use "think" pieces (or speculative writings) to connect theory to practice, to consider the course readings and discussions in light of their own experiences as learners. Think pieces focused on key issues or topics in the teaching of writing which emerged during class discussions: adapting the writing workshop, managing response to student writing, teaching skills in a process classroom, evaluating writing, conferencing in class, managing collaborative processes, and so on. These personal essays extended teacher candidates' own questions and purposefully remained exploratory in nature.

As the quarter progressed, we negotiated eight working criteria for effective pieces which helped us focus our responses to one another: genuine questions raised, sense of voice, sense of movement/flow, evoking reader's response, evidence that thinking was influenced by texts or current theories in teaching writing, conclusions or further questions raised, realistic alternatives for teaching explored, and evidence of technical skill in writing. We participated regularly in writing groups in order to share drafts and "finished" products. I published anonymous excerpts from all think pieces at various points during the quarter, and community-building occurred as individual voices resonated during read-alouds. These think pieces allowed opportunities for teacher candidates to "think aloud" together, to engage in the

processes of articulating their own ideas, of listening to the ideas of their peers, and of comparing those ideas with their own.

Think Piece One: Tearing Down Walls of Self-Doubt. Anne often used metaphors to explore her questions and concerns in think pieces. In her first piece, she blended her own past experiences and her emerging ideas about teaching writing and tried to envision herself in the role of teacher. Once again, her words echoed the themes of voice and self-confidence:

> Writers who lack self-confidence are often the hardest to reach because they have barricaded themselves behind a wall of self-doubt. It can be a long and tedious process to tear down these walls, . . . but as teachers it is our responsibility to try.

Anne believed that teachers should move toward creating an atmosphere of trust in their classrooms. As a teacher, she envisioned herself eliminating student competition and creating community. She saw herself fighting fear, stress, and anxiety by providing multiple opportunities and choices for student writers. "Teaching students to trust their own voices and their own creativity is the basis for building confident writers," Anne announced. She vowed to "tear down the walls of self-doubt, one brick at a time."

Think Piece Two: Tearing Down Old Beliefs. Letting go of the past is never easy, especially when we must move forward into unknown territory. "I find myself challenged with the dilemma of tearing down old beliefs to make way for something new, but I am still searching for answers as to what that something new will be," Anne worried. Images in her second piece revealed her inner struggle to match her evolving ideas about teaching and learning with notions of evaluation and assessment:

> I find myself still trying to grab hold to the sides of the ship as it slowly sinks into the deep dark nothingness where educational ideas that were destined to fail go to rest. I struggle and I fight my urge to cling to that which is familiar and safe. What is this loyalty I feel to a grading system that has been my enemy for so many years? I am

> caught in the dilemma of wanting to build confident student writers while at the same time knowing I must assign a grade. . . . I am watching my ship sink as the red ink trails behind it.

Anne believed that young writers need encouragement as well as constructive criticism which nudges them to improve. She felt "caught somewhere in the middle, . . . wanting to incorporate the best of both worlds in the writing classroom." Elbow (1983) describes Anne's feelings when he writes that "good teaching seems a struggle because it calls on skills and mentalities that are actually contrary to each other and thus tend to interfere with each other" (p. 327). He portrays the painful process of transformation that Anne was undergoing in this course:

> [L]earning involves both assimilation and accommodation. Part of the job is to get the subject matter to bend and deform so that it fits inside the learner. . . . Just as important is the necessity for the learner to bend and deform himself so that he can fit himself around the subject without doing violence to it. Good learning is not a matter of finding a happy medium where both parties are transformed as little as possible. Rather both parties must be maximally transformed--in a sense deformed. There is violence in learning. We cannot learn something without eating it, yet we cannot really learn it either without letting it eat us. (p. 223)

Learning to embrace contraries in the teaching of writing was very difficult for Anne, something which she described as "the tightrope teachers must walk." She recognized the difficulty of "critiquing writing without destroying creativity and confidence," but tried to seek a balance:

> I don't know all the answers. I'm convinced no one does. I find myself continually walking this tightrope in my own thinking, knowing all the while my students are the ones at risk of falling if I lean too far to the left or too far to the right. I always seem to return to find a balancing point somewhere in the middle where there are no definitive answers only instincts and glimmers of hope.

Think Piece Three: Living the Life of a Writer. "Teachers can't possibly expect to understand how to teach writing if they don't write themselves." Anne's own experiences

again surfaced as she wrote about herself as a "teaching writer" in her third piece. She clearly defined her belief in the importance of writing with students: 1) if we want students to value writing, we must value it ourselves; 2) if we are not writers, we will never be able to empathize with our students' struggles; and 3) if we share our drafts with students, they will learn to view writing as a continual process of thinking and rethinking.

By the time Anne had written this piece, she had moved toward insights, toward a clearer vision of herself as a teacher: "What students really need is for teachers to come down off their pedestals and join them in their writing." Finally, Anne equated the process of writing with the process of teaching: "For me, writing is a continual challenge. That's what I like best and sometimes what I fear most. I think that's probably the way I'll feel about teaching writing."

Think Piece Four: Living the Questions in Learning to Teach. All 27 teacher candidates arrived in my course wanting to learn a set of recipes which would make them good teachers of writing. "It is not surprising that my students want answers," Wilson (1992) writes:

> School has taught them that knowledge about teaching or history or mathematics or biology is conclusive, final, concrete. They have never been exposed to the exciting aspects of knowing: refutation, argument, construction, interpretation. No wonder learning is boring to them--even distasteful at times. On the way to the classroom, the very characteristics that make knowledge worth knowing got lost. (p. 140)

Throughout Anne's portfolio she dealt with her continual longing for answers. Her fourth think piece focused solely on this issue and thus became a rallying cry for all the future teachers in the class. As one peer responded, Anne touched on the most important theme in the course: "Obviously, you addressed everything we've been wondering about, everything

we've been bitching about. I like your conclusion that we should quit bitching and be glad to build our own theories."

In her fourth and final think piece, Anne began,

> As a child, I would go to my father with my homework and say, "Dad, what's the answer to this problem?" And he would excitedly begin to go through a long, drawn out explanation of how you go about getting the answer. After a few minutes, I would stop him and say, "Dad, I don't need to know all this, just give me the answer." With frustration in his voice, he would always refuse, making me sit for what seemed like hours listening to his lengthy explanations. Afterwards, my father would say, "Anne, you can't always expect someone else to give you the answer; what I'm trying to show you is how to find answers on your own."

"It's not surprising," Anne reflected, "that I would sit in this class and mumble to myself, 'Just give me the answer!' But like my father, you never would." How did Anne and the others reconcile their fears of coming up with their own answers, of building their own theories of teaching and learning? Encountering "no clear and easy answers," Anne formulated her *Salad Bar Theory of Education*:

> In sorting out my feelings about this class, I began to search for an analogy that described how I felt. As funny as it sounds, I see this class as a big salad bar. In the past, when I ordered a salad in a restaurant, they brought it to me. I never asked questions about the salad; I just ate it. Recently, I tried a new restaurant called education. "I'll have a house salad," I announced. To my surprise, the people there looked at me kind of funny and replied, "I'm sorry, but you'll have to make your own salad."
>
> I angrily thought, "What kind of restaurant is this, making me fix my own salad?" But I decided to stroll over to the salad bar to check it out. Peering down the line, I was overwhelmed by all the different items. How would I ever be able to decide? What if I made wrong choices? Many experienced eaters gave me conflicting advice. Standing in the middle of a salad bar war, I decided (since I was new at this) to try a little bit of everything. I began to pile my salad as high as it would go while the other more experienced salad-makers heckled me, saying I was doing it all wrong.
>
> I ignored them and continued building my salad. I haven't gotten to taste my salad. I'll probably find things that I don't like about it, but that's okay. Every day I'm seeing new things to put on my salad. I still have a lot to learn about salad making.
>
> The most important thing that I've learned during the ten weeks that I've been eating at this restaurant is this: every person's salad is going to be different. There

> are no right or wrong salads, and no one can tell me how to make my salad. I have to learn that myself. I'll admit that ordering a house salad is much more simple, but now that I've been at the salad bar, I like it better. I get to discover my own answers and choose, for myself, what goes on my salad.

An Ethnographic Project: The Power of Inquiry

> *I tell you one thing, if you learn it by yourself, if you have to get down and dig for it, it never leaves you. It stays there as long as you live because you had to dig it out of the mud before you learned what it was. --Aunt Addie Norton*

Kutz and Roskelly (1991) and Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) maintain the importance of formal inquiries which enable teachers and teacher candidates to create their own pedagogical theories. "What is missing from the knowledge base of teaching," Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1990) write, "are *the voices of the teachers themselves* [italics added], the questions teachers ask, the ways teachers use writing and intentional talk in their work lives, and the interpretive frames teachers use to understand and improve their own classroom practices" (p. 2). Lytle and Cochran-Smith (1990) have expanded our definitions of teacher research to include teachers' journals and personal essays as well as more formal classroom ethnographies or case studies of individual students. Teacher research, Cochran-Smith and Lytle argue, may be defined as "systematic, intentional inquiry by teachers about their own school and classroom work" (1993, pp. 23-24).

Throughout this preservice course, I asked the teacher candidates to become engaged in such research, and I continually reminded them that such work would become a regular part of their teaching lives. As Anne's portfolio demonstrates, this course immersed her in all sorts of systematic inquiry: autobiographical writing, written explorations about critical issues in the teaching of composition, an individual case study project, and continual written

reflection concerning these and other activities. Through the processes of observation, action, and reflection, Anne began building her own theory of writing instruction. For Anne, the case study project proved to be most meaningful.

Anne observed two eighth-graders in a local language arts class and conducted interviews with them about their writing. The research project took place at a time when Anne admitted feeling "cynical":

> I was questioning not only my talent to be an effective teacher, but also the practicality of all that we've learned this quarter. Sure it worked for Atwell, but would it work for me? Did I even want to teach? I found the answers to both during this project.

Observing the class, Anne began to connect the theories she was reading about to actual practice. "Everything we've learned suddenly began to take shape," she reflected. She was amazed by the students' enthusiasm for writing in this classroom:

> The students could have easily been quoting from Atwell as they talked with me about writing groups, revising, peer editing, time to write and share their writing in class. I can never put into words the enthusiasm these students had about this English class. For the first time in their lives, these students were learning to write. And they were excited about it.

Digging deep in order to find answers on her own, Anne continued to move forward in the course. In her portfolio, she referred to this case study project as the most powerful learning experience during the quarter: "I had no idea two eighth graders could teach me so much," Anne concluded. "If Nancie Atwell were here right now, she would say, 'I told you so.' But it has never been enough for someone to tell me it will work; I have to be shown. I see now that these approaches can work--and work well."

Ending Thoughts, Beginning Thoughts

> *I leaped headlong into the sea, and thereby have become better acquainted with the soundings, the quicksands, and the rocks, than if I had stayed upon the green shore, and piped a silly pipe, and took tea and comfortable advice. --John Keats*

> *"Come to the edge," he said.*
> *They said, "We are afraid."*
> *"Come to the edge," he said.*
> *They came.*
> *He pushed them. . . .*
> *And they flew.*
>
> *--Guillaume Apollinaire*

"I have struggled for answers in this class--answers about teaching and about myself," Anne wrote in her portfolio's concluding statement. Participating in the course proved to be a transformative experience for her: "This class brought me both agony and exhilaration, moments when I painfully had to look at myself and the way I wanted to teach." She continued:

> As a class, we questioned everything. We continually demanded that you give us answers. I realize now that a really good teacher doesn't give answers but leads students toward the discovery of finding answers on their own. I was so busy asking for answers that often I didn't take the time to listen or to see that you were pointing me toward the answers without my even knowing it.

Anne's experiences in the teaching of writing course helped her formulate new definitions of teaching and learning. "Learning is not merely finding one simple answer for a problem or situation," she discovered, "but rather a continual journey in which we discover and rediscover many different answers and solutions to our questions."

Writing about the necessary reconceptualization of teacher education, Fosnot (1989) suggests,

> If change is to occur in teacher education, the new models advanced must be based on what we know about teaching and learning, and they must aim at producing teachers who are decision makers, researchers, and articulate change agents. (p. xiii)

This course's emphasis on inquiry, reflection, collaboration, and theory-building enabled teacher candidates to begin to view "learning as construction and teaching as a facilitating process to enhance and enrich development" (Fosnot, 1989, p. xi). As the teacher educator in this course, I continually *pushed* these preservice teachers to reflect upon their own experiences in school and to begin to voice their own beliefs about teaching and learning. As Richert (1992) explains,

> Learning to teach is just like learning anything else that is difficult, uncertain, complex, and infinitely challenging. . . . One place where "giving voice" is essential in teacher education, therefore, is in the articulation of ideas and beliefs about teaching as one enters the field. (pp. 188, 191)

My goal was to immerse these individuals in an environment where they could powerfully connect their past experiences with present experiences, where they were asked repeatedly to articulate connections between their preconceptions of schooling and their new experiences in the composition methods course. Like Richert (1992), I believe that teacher education programs should have "a structured expectation of voice" (192).

All of the structured course experiences invited these teacher candidates to write in their own voices and to engage in a reflective dialogue with others--their peers, university faculty, experienced teachers in local schools, students in these schools, and so on. In particular, the portfolio keeping process helped Anne find joy in her learning and in her investigation of the teaching/learning process. Documenting her own growth as a teacher candidate, she moved toward becoming a thoughtful, reflective, autonomous decision-maker. In addition, in constantly working with others, she learned about the importance of

collaborative inquiry. Perhaps some would say that Anne's "theory" remained largely underdeveloped as she exited this course. I argue, however, that she took the first important steps toward the articulation of a personal theory of teaching, learning, and assessment in writing classrooms. Because she completed her *own* portfolio, Anne began to name a theory of assessment which emphasized student responsibility, process, and personal empowerment. In her own way, she began to redefine or reinvent herself as a learner and a teacher. As Anne's journey reveals, the struggle to develop a portfolio--and in doing so, *to develop a voice as an emerging teacher*--can in itself be one of the most important experiences a future writing teacher can have:

> At the beginning of this quarter, I was first and foremost a STUDENT. I lived from assignment to assignment, quarter to quarter. I have been steadily transformed over the past ten weeks, however, into a more self-actualized person with a vision of my future. . . . My perceptions of English and what it means to be a teacher have evolved into a personal philosophy that is exciting, but not yet completely comfortable. That is as it should be, I think. I have grown so much this quarter, but I want to keep going. *I feel like this is the beginning rather than the end.* . . . And I have finally come to terms with the possible advantages of portfolio assessment for my own future students. I must admit that even the Tierney [1991] book did not completely erase my doubts about such an approach. But working on my own portfolio *did.*

CATEGORIES OF PRESERVICE TEACHERS' PORTFOLIO ARTIFACTS

Introductory and/or Concluding Statements. Demonstrated an ability to reflect on one's own work. Revealed growth and risk-taking. Discussed the potential value which the portfolio might hold for readers. Assumed an active role for the future by asking, "What's next?"

Individual Goals. Individual lists of writing goals which incorporated references to negotiated class goals.

Personal Histories/Autobiographical Writings. Explored memories of learning to read and write, of continued literacy development. Took stance of an informed critic or autobiographer.

"Think" Pieces. Personal essays which considered "burning" questions on the teaching of writing. Intentionally speculative in tone. Topics varied widely.

Biography of One "Think" Piece. Included drafts of one personal essay and reflective statements of the individual writer's process in composing the think piece. Highlighted readers' responses to drafts as well as self-evaluation.

Group Case Study Project. A written summary and self-evaluation of a small group project. Each group completed a close examination of a student writer profile or case study (Miller Cleary, 1991) and then engaged the class in a discussion of the case.

Individual Case Study Project. A teacher research project. A brief case study of a student writer (based on interviews with a student and classroom observations in local school settings). Contained a sense of the student's voice, sense of context, interpretive comments, and samples of student writing.

Individual Writings. Completed in response to individual goals which were determined at the beginning of the quarter. Examples include poetry, journal excerpts, articles for publication, recorded oral histories, children's books, papers for other classes, and so on.

Drawings/Maps of Potential Classroom Environments. Sketches of individual teacher candidates' ideas about model classroom environments for writing.

Reflective, Self-Evaluative Writings. Reflections interjected throughout the portfolio which revealed how different course experiences contributed to personal learning.

Figure 1. Categories of Preservice Teachers' Portfolio Artifacts

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